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ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

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EPA Administrator Christine Whitman, in a memo to top agency officials, last week reaffirmed the agency's commitment to environmental justice and its integration into all programs, policies, and activities consistent with existing environmental laws and their regulations.

In the memo, Whitman said environmental justice means fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of all environmental laws and policies and their meaningful involvement in the decision making processes of the government.

The Administrator said environmental statutes provide many opportunities to address environmental risks and hazards in minority or low-income communities. "Application of these existing statutory provisions is an important part of this Agency's effort to prevent those communities from being subject to disproportionately high and adverse impacts and environmental effects," Whitman said.

Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or social economic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies.

"Environmental justice is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work," Whitman said.

The Administrator stressed that the Agency would need to conduct the programs and activities

that substantially affect human health and the environment in a manner that ensures the fair treatment of all people, including minority populations and/or low-income populations. She said the Agency should ensure greater public participation in the Agency's development and implementation of environmental regulations and policies. Further information is available at: <http://es.epa.gov/oeca/main/ej>

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